(c) and (d) Seven MoUs/Agreements were signed during the 2nd IBSA Summit in South Africa on 17 October, 2007 in the fields of Public Administration and Governance, Higher Education, Health and Medicine, Culture, Social Issues, Wind Resources and Customs and Tax Administration Cooperation.

(e) The implementation of the MoUs/Agreements in intended to improve and promote people-to-people contacts in a number of areas, for example, development of cooperative exchange programmes, promoting cooperation in the areas of HIV/AIDS, TB, malaria, procurement of medicine, vaccines etc. and exchange of cultural activities.

Policy intervention for acutely underdeveloped districts

123. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM:
SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:
SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government will resort to specific policy intervention for districts with chronic unemployment and industrial underdevelopment;

(b) whether the data on these districts is being collected by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, based on 16 reports of the Planning Commission, some of which date back to 1960s;

(c) whether out of the total 700 districts about 170 are acutely underdeveloped, of which 70 per cent are in the eastern part of the country;

(d) whether the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and Bharat Nirman initiative focused in these districts; and

(e) what are the concrete programmes of action plan prepared in this reaged?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) and (b) Various studies in the past have sought to identify industrially backward regions in the country. More recently, with a view to focus on districts specific cases of industrial backwardness, inter-departmental meetings have been held and the relevant data available is being analysed to finalise and implement concrete policy decisions to address purposively the causes of industrial backwardness in various districts in a calibrated manner.

(c) In 2005 Planning Commission has identified 170 most backward districts in the country for the purpose of redressing growing regional imbalances. More than half of these districts are located in the eastern region of the country.

(d) National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 (NREGA) was launched for securing the livelihood of the people in rural areas by guaranteeing 100 days of employment in a financial year to a rural household. It has been decided to cover all rural areas of the country under NREGA with effect from 01.04.2008. The initiative also focused under Bharat Nirman in

these districts are (i) Every village to be provided electricity (ii) Every habitation over 1000 population and above (500 in hilly and tribal areas) to be provided an all-weather road (iii) Every habitation to have a safe source of drinking water (iv) Every village to be connected by telephone (v) 100 lakhs hectares of additional irrigation capacity to be created by 2009 (vi) 60 lakhs house to be constructed for the rural poor by 2009. Thus both the program will include districts which have remained underdeveloped including those in the eastern region of the country.

(e) Apart from the above mentioned schemes, the Backward Regions Grant Fund (BRGF) was launched in August, 2006 to cover 250 districts including 170 districts identified as backward by the Inter-Ministry Task Group on Redressing Growing Regional Imbalances.

Survey on effect of big Industries in retail on small shopkeepers

†124. DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI:

SHRI RAJ MOHINDER SINGH MAJITHA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a survey has been conducted on the instructions of Prime Minister's Office to ascertain the effect on the small shopkeepers owing to the entry of big industrialists in the retail market;

(b) if so, when was this survey conducted and the names of cities covered therein;

(c) the name of the institution of which the work survey had been entrusted; and

(d) the facts mentioned in the survey report with regard to the effects being faced by the small shopkeepers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) to (d) Government has instituted a study to assess the impact of organized retailing on unorganized retail trade through Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER). The terms of reference of the study are in the statement (*See* below). Government has also commissioned a study to the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) on Growth linkages of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in India which would focus on the impact of FDI on rural economy. The final reports are yet to be submitted by these organisations.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi